



OFFICE OF THE  
WATER DEPARTMENT  
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**Water Commission Minutes**  
**Wednesday, August 25, 2021**

**Approved: 9/29/21**

John O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm  
Other member(s) present: Mat Morton  
Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level  
In attendance: Mike Martin, Roads Commission

**Reviewed & Signed:**

- All Bills Outstanding Since Last Meeting
- All Payroll Outstanding Since Last Meeting

**Well No. 1 Operational Update & Department Operations Update**

Mr. O'Brien reported on a leak on Lowell Street. It's most like the 1 ½ inch main that's there. David Tully and David Bray have both looked. It is a water leak and they've tested the pH of the water and it appears likely to be from the water system. Another issue is the water pressure coming from the wells. SWSS was checking the well station and saw a significant spike. It appears that the Fire Dept. is opening a hydrant and leaving it running while they are doing various tasks. Once they turn the hydrant off the pressure drops and the well pump goes off. It can cause some issues with pipes causing some vibration issues including cracking of pipes. The huge pressure jumps up and down are bad. They can also blow the well pumps and pipes can burst as well. There are also issues with service connections to ratepayers which could also become damaged. Mr. O'Brien asked the records to be checked and this appears to have been going on for some time. Can it be definitively determined that the issue on Lowell Street is connected? No. But it is possible. The Commission concluded that discussions should be had with the Fire Dept. There are a few things the Fire Dept. can do to not cause this issue while still conducting their normal operations. Mr. Morton noted that this usage could be easily 6,000 gallons a week if they're doing this twice. Mr. O'Brien concurred noting that DEP sees our reports and they could conclude that this usage is problematic. Mr. Morton suggested they need to report the amount they use and to track it so we have something for DEP. Mr. O'Brien felt it prudent to consult with the Town Administrator and the Fire Chief. This is not about blame for any problems, it's about making sure we don't have further leaks or any issues with DEP. Fire Dept. likely thinks it's safe to conduct these operations given the new water tower, but we still have old pipes in some parts of the system and we have to keep those in mind.

**Infrastructure Project Update**

Mr. Voelker reported that at their last meeting the Advisory Board expressed some interest in potentially revisiting the split in payment for the debt service for the Water Infrastructure Project. Currently the split is 75/25 with water ratepayers bearing 75 percent of the debt service paid through rates and 25 percent paid by the town as a whole via property rate taxes through a debt exclusion. The Advisory Board has expressed some concern after the recent rate increase that this split while currently sustainable could in time become less sustainable if enough ratepayers are able to drill wells or find ways to reduce consumption. While no decision has been taken at this stage, the Advisory Board hopes to address this in the future, perhaps by seeing the split changed or modified

to something closer to 50/50. That said Mr. Palaia has reported that three of the six members of the Advisory Board are ratepayers and as a result are conflicted. This returns the question to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. O'Brien noted he's spoken with several well drillers and the costs are a lot higher than many realize. Further the town has an arsenic problem that often requires a filter and that can cost an additional \$5,000 depending on the situation. He saw no reason until we actually see a significant number of ratepayers come off the system. This can always be revisited later. Mr. Morton concurred, noting as a ratepayer he isn't thrilled to see his bill increase, but it's done and we should see how things pan out.

### **SWSS Update**

Mr. O'Brien noted there isn't much to report on this subject aside from the leak on Lowell Street.

### **Next Meeting/Regular Meetings**

The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for September 22, 2021.

### **Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll**

The Commission considered and signed off on all of its outstanding bills. The Commission then reviewed and approved payment of the bills and also signed all outstanding department payroll. Mr. O'Brien then briefly reported on all bills he'd reviewed and approved since the last meeting in his capacity as chair. He noted these are the usual ones, utilities, SWSS, alarm, and the like.

### **Water Rates**

There was nothing to report on this topic as the water rate hearing has been held.

### **Minutes**

The Commission considered the minutes from July 14 & July 28, 2021. The July 14 minutes cover the Water Rate Hearing and the July 28 minutes cover the ordinary meeting for that month. Seeing no reason not to approve them the Commission proceeded with doing so.

A motion was made by Mr. Morton to approve the minutes of July 14, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

A motion was made by Mr. Morton to approve the minutes of July 28, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

### **Additional Topics Discussed Not Noted on the Agenda**

#### **Rt. 113 Project**

Mr. Martin spoke about the Rt. 113 Project. The hope is to do work on the pipes up Hillcrest Street with ideally a loop formed coming back down Westford Street back to Main Street. Currently the project will result in some upgrades and pipe replacement for the sections of Main Street impacted by the project. This work on Hillcrest and Westford would be in addition to that project and the funding has not as of yet been secured. Roads Commission has advocated for this additional work from the beginning. Unfortunately finding funding for the additional work has been difficult. Right now there may be the opportunity to fund the work from ARPA funding, but it's unclear at this stage. Further, with the infrastructure package being debated in Congress that might also result in some funding. This work in addition to the Rt. 113 Project would be a significant improvement for the

system. He asked the Commission to do whatever advocacy they could think of to help. The more people are advocating for it the more likely we'll find some source of funding. Mr. Voelker noted that the Board of Selectmen is committed to finding a source of funding if at all possible and to spending some of the towns ARPA funds for this if it is permissible.

#### **Question on Water Bill for 533 Main Street**

The bill outstanding for 533 Main Street still hasn't been paid bill. The Commission's position was that if it isn't paid soon then the prior late fees which were waived at the request of the ratepayer will be restored to the bill. The Commission has been more than patient, in its collective opinion, having already reduced this bill in the first place.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morton at 6:30 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jakob K. Voelker".

Jakob K. Voelker  
Administrative Assistant, Dunstable Water Department